

SPRINGSTIMES

Your Sandy Springs News Source



Greetings!

As a result of sound management, the City of Sandy Springs is in solid financial shape. For the coming year the City's operational expenditures will remain stable, taxes will not be raised, and some capital expenditures are feasible. We are in an enviable situation, especially in comparison to so many cities and counties that must cut services or raise taxes.

Although the final budget has not been approved as of this writing, the direction is clear enough for me to report general conclusions.

Revenues for the 2010 Fiscal Year beginning July 1st will be down considerably. We project 20 percent less revenue than for the current year. This is a result of expected reductions in property taxes, because of lower appraisals, as well as a major reduction in business and occupational taxes. The latter is based on gross receipts of businesses, and with reduced consumer spending, gross receipts are down. Additionally, permits for construction are down precipitously, and if they pick up before July of 2010, this would present us with a pleasant surprise.

With such a steep reduction of revenues, how are we able to keep our expenditures stable for the next year? The answer is that we were able to carry over a good cushion from the prior year. Our revenues are not expected to generate a new cushion in the coming year, but fortunately we can use last year's to see us through.

When I point to using the left over cushion, please note I am not referring to the designated reserve fund of 16 percent of the total budget—a level we adopted at inception of cityhood. This is the rainy day fund for unexpected events. Not only does this designated reserve fund offer coverage for bleak prospects, but it is also a measure used by the bond market to assess a city's ability to repay any bonds.

While Sandy Springs has not issued any bonds, the day may come when we might be able to do so to rebuild Hammond Park, a City Hall or a Police headquarters. The reserve fund is so important that at this writing it appears Council will add a few million dollars to it, without having an impact on operating expenses.

Also, just as newlyweds try to put something aside for a down payment on their first house, so the City is budgeting for eventual purchase of its own facilities. Additionally, the City will continue to repave roads on a scientifically determined priority based on road conditions. Park improvements will continue. The relief of traffic congestion continues to be a priority. The sidewalk program will be continued.

Slowly, but surely, Sandy Springs will overcome the many years of neglect. The sound management of our city in cooperation with our private partner, CH2M HILL, makes progress possible.

Mayor Eva Galambos, PhD
City of Sandy Springs



Fire Department Trains to be Top Notch Responders

Sandy Springs Fire Rescue maintains a rigorous training schedule. Over the past several months they have had two 40-hour courses to give them invaluable assets as firefighters in Sandy Springs: driver training and car seat technician training.

"The driver training was a great course because we have a lot of traffic as well as tight spots like apartment complexes in the City—there are 76 complexes, in fact. This training will help us maneuver in those types of situations," said Mark Duke, Sandy Springs Fire Rescue Assistant Chief for Training and Support Services. "The car seat class is also important. We have people stop in each station almost on a daily basis to have their car seats checked. This will bring our total number of certified technicians to 16 and they will be evenly spaced out at all four fire stations."

The driver training class nationally certified the drivers of our fire apparatuses. There was a classroom portion and a driving portion of the training. Five of our drivers currently have this certification, and this

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Sandy Springs Police Senior Officer Mark Johnson left for duty in Iraq in April. He will join the Army Reserve's 314th to rebuild projects that will make everyday life better for Iraqis.

SSPD Officer Heads to Iraq for Tour of Duty

Sandy Springs Police Senior Officer Mark Johnson knew he'd be getting the call sometime soon—the call to go back to Iraq. Johnson is assigned to the Army Reserve's 314th Civil Affairs Team. It has been five years since his last deployment and he knew it was just about time: The Army would be looking for him for a tour of duty.

"We will be working in a section of Iraq. Our job is to meet mayors and tribal leaders and identify projects to

build that will make their life better," said Johnson. "These could consist of wells, schools, and other projects. They are built with Commander's Emergency Relief Funds or CERF, which are US dollars at work in Iraq. It's usually about \$30 million. However, now that we are trying to wind things down over there, it could be a lot less this time."

No stranger to Iraq, Johnson was there when the country was invaded. Now, his orders for deployment are for 400 days. "I believe Iraq is a much safer place than it was in 2003. But, what I do, we go in six-12-man teams so there is an element of danger to it," Johnson added. "I believe my training as a police officer has definitely taught me lessons I can use there. We will also be training the police force there. So, I can teach them tactics, house searches, combat patrols. I can use lessons here as well when I come home."

Johnson said the toughest part about being gone this time versus his last deployment is being away from his new son and wife. Johnson is a native Atlantan and has been with the Sandy Springs Police Department since its inception on July 1, 2006. He has been a police officer for 12 years.

Is Your Address Visible?

The City of Sandy Springs is embarking on a visible address program that will involve both residents and businesses to ensure all property is clearly marked with a visible address. This will aid the City of Sandy Springs Police and Fire Departments when making emergency calls to property within the City. As it stands now, many properties are unmarked or marked with substandard numbers.

"During an emergency, it takes valuable time for personnel to find the exact location of a call, when the simple solution could be to

have numbers that are six inches high for businesses," said Sandy Springs Fire Chief Jack McElfish. "While we have GIS mapping systems that get us there, there's nothing like visual confirmation that we are in the right place. Numbers are key."

The City recommends that numbers be at least six inches high for businesses and three inches high for residences and be against a contrasting background. For more information on visible addresses, please visit the City's dedicated Web page at www.sandyspringsga.org.

City of Sandy Springs Code states:

Business addresses should be:

6-12" in height, be above the door and be contrasting in color from the background.

Residential addresses should be:

A minimum of 3" in height and have a contrasting background.

Freestanding signs should have:

Numbers that are a minimum of 6" in height, be visible from both directions and be on a contrasting background.



Fire Rescue Technician II Christopher Cagle speaks with visitors at the car seat installation tent at the Target at The Prado. Cagle and 13 other City of Sandy Springs firefighters went through a week long car seat installation training that combined classroom instruction, hands-on work with car seats and vehicles and the community safety seat checkup event, where students demonstrated proper use and installation of child restraints and safety belts and then taught the skills to parents.

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will add another 20 drivers who will be certified. They learned rules of the road, practice exercises and drove a cone course. Now the drivers hold a certification to go anywhere in the nation and drive a fire apparatus.

The national standardized child passenger safety technician certification course is usually four to five days long. It combines classroom instruction, hands-on work with car seats and vehicles and a community safety seat checkup event, where students demonstrate proper use and installation of child restraints and safety belts and then they teach these skills to parents. Successful completion of this course certifies the firefighter as a CPS technician for two years. Sandy Springs Fire Rescue had 14 firefighters take the class. The event culminated in a car seat check at Target at the Prado, where an estimated 17 vehicles were checked. The class is taught in partnership with Safe Kids Worldwide, National Child Passenger Safety Board, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and State Farm.

Sandy Springs Residents Graduate from Citizens Police Academy

If you have ever wanted to be a policeman but weren't quite ready to pull the trigger, the City of Sandy Springs Police Academy might be just the thing for you. A 10-week course taught at Police headquarters this past spring to 28 residents covered topics from the legal process and warrants to gang investigations to how the K-9 Unit works to the ever popular crime scene investigation techniques. Graduation was held March 30, 2009.

Sandy Springs Crime Prevention Officer Larry Jacobs and Lieutenant Steve Rose ran the Academy and were thrilled with the residents' responses and enthusiasm for the program. "It was very well received," Jacobs said. "The idea behind it was to get residents more involved with the Police Department. Once they are trained, they can take on things like writing reports and helping us with special events. It's all about getting more eyes and ears out there."

Jacobs added that larger, better equipped cities like Sandy Springs can tackle a program like a Citizens Academy. He says they run best where you have officers who are credentialed and want to teach, but also where the interest is high from the residents.

"A survey was done with this class and we got great feedback," added Jacobs. "We will also be making some slight adjustments,



Twenty-eight residents graduated from the Sandy Springs Citizens Police Academy in March. The course ranged in topics from the legal process and warrants to gang investigations to how the K-9 Unit works to the ever popular crime scene investigation techniques. The next open course is in January 2010.

like extending the class to two-and-a-half hours per session. There's just a lot of material to cover, plus you have trips to the firing range, the jail and a ride along. There's a lot to do."

Although there will be another class in September, it is already filled. One is slated for January 2010. Each candidate must undergo a background check, sign a waiver and be a resident of Sandy Springs. To be added to the list, please call 770-730-5600 and ask for Officer Jacobs.

City Tackles Vacant Properties Through VPEP

In July of 2008, the City of Sandy Springs had 53 vacant properties. In November, that number spiked to 100. It has also been as low as 21. What is important to note is that the City of Sandy Springs established the Vacant Property Enforcement Program (VPEP) to deal with these numbers that ebb and flow like the tide.

There is one code enforcement officer dedicated to the program. While he still must perform his other job duties, a portion of his time is dedicated to vacant properties. Prior to the inception of the program, the properties were merely maintained and if one fell out of compliance the owner was cited for a particular infraction, such as grass needing to be cut.



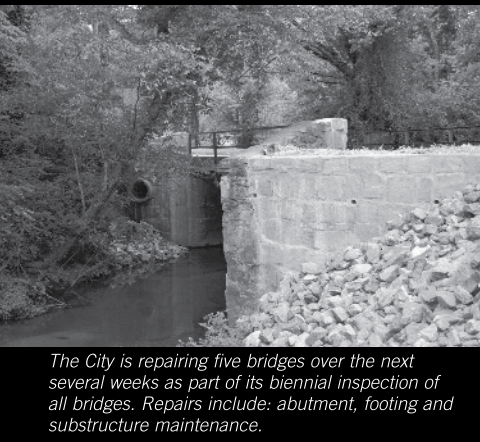
Marcus Kellum, assistant director of the code enforcement division in the Community Development Department says there are three main reasons VPEP began, "... the state of the economy, issues with existing construction sites and issues with foreclosures. That's why we now have VPEP."



"The biggest change is the single point of contact," said Kellum. "This helps us route customer complaints and be responsive to residents, lending institutions and property owners. It's a systematic approach." The program is always in a state of change as properties are coming into and out of compliance and are being rented, so they are no longer vacant, or they could even be demolished, which is the last resort.

Kellum adds the City is serious about bringing properties into compliance, although they have not paid for any properties to be demolished. An offender will get a warning first and a citation second. All charges are misdemeanors and carry penalties of up to \$1,000 and six months in jail per day per violation. The average case takes between one to two months to clear.

"The whole purpose of what we do is to get these properties into compliance and ensure the community is safe. Vacant properties pose a safety risk. They can attract crime, vagrants, pests, and we don't want that for Sandy Springs," Kellum concluded.



The City is repairing five bridges over the next several weeks as part of its biennial inspection of all bridges. Repairs include: abutment, footing and substructure maintenance.

Sandy Springs Bridges to be Repaired

The City of Sandy Springs is conducting maintenance repairs on five bridges in the City. The locations of the bridges are: Spalding Drive at Ball Mill Creek, Riverside Drive at Marsh Creek, Brandon Mill Road at Marsh Creek, Lake Forest Drive at Long Island Creek and Jett Road at Long Island Creek. The bridge maintenance includes: abutment, footing and substructure maintenance. Periodic maintenance is required due to damage from water flow as well as replacement of major components and failures from loading. The maintenance measures prolong the life of the bridge and defer the cost of replacement. Other future repairs include: bridge guardrail/protection installation, installation of rubber bridge joints at all bridges and continuation of repairs to concrete decks and substructures as needed. Not all bridges need all repairs.

The bridge repair bid was awarded to Woodwind Construction. There are 21 bridges in which the City is responsible for maintenance. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) conducts biennial inspection of all bridges and provides the City with a detailed report with sufficiency ratings of these bridges. GDOT will assist the City with replacement projects if warranted subject to statewide aid program availability. The City has gone beyond the GDOT inspection by hiring a specialized engineering firm to inspect and recommend a maintenance program.

The City does not maintain interstate bridges or bridges on state routes. These bridges are GDOT's responsibility.

As Summer Floats in so Do New Amenities at Morgan Falls Parks

Starting in June, residents will be able to take advantage of Up the River Outfitters and rent kayaks, canoes and tubes from the rental station set up at Morgan Falls River Park. The station will be open seven days a week for rentals from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Renters will be able to choose from a two-hour paddle and a four-hour paddle both starting at Morgan Falls. The two-hour paddle will end at Powers Island, and the four-hour paddle will end at Paces Mill. All rental fees include a return shuttle back to Morgan Falls River Park.

Also at the Morgan Falls River Park is the new Dog Park. The Dog Park contains two fenced in areas, one for large dogs and one for small dogs. It has shaded areas and water hook-ups as well as large areas for dogs to run off leash.

The Morgan Falls River Park is not the only park that the City is currently working on. The other two projects underway are the Morgan Falls Overlook Park and the Morgan Falls Athletic Fields. "The Overlook Park request for proposals for the construction of the park will be going out in the next few weeks," said Director of Recreation and Parks Ronnie Young. The contract for the installation of the playground equipment was just awarded and construction of the \$3.2 million park is due to begin in late summer.

Construction at the Morgan Falls Athletic Fields is underway and will continue throughout the summer. The stadium, locker rooms, concessions stand and bleachers have all been demolished at the football field. The grading work was completed in May at the east end of the football field where the two new baseball fields will be installed.



Kayakers, canoers and tubers will become a regular site in the waters at the new Morgan Falls River Park in the coming weeks. On shore, dogs will get to run off leash at the new Dog Park there. Just down the road at Morgan Falls Overlook Park, construction will begin soon.

30342 Official Sandy Springs Zip Code

Residents and businesses in 30342 join those in 30350 and 30328 as being officially designated Zip codes for the City of Sandy Springs. Instead of writing "Atlanta" on mail, the US Postal Service is now recognizing "Sandy Springs." The Atlanta District of the US Postal Service worked with City Manager John McDonough to make the change.

"Now that our City is almost four years old, I am hopeful that more and more businesses and families will use 'Sandy Springs' in their formal address," said Mayor Eva Galambos. "One way to demonstrate our civic pride is to use 'Sandy Springs' in our address."

Mailers in all three Zip codes should use Sandy Springs as the City designation. However, if one goes to the USPS Web site and types in 30342 only into the Zip code look up, Atlanta will be returned as the city in the standardized address.

Contact Us

Sandy Springs Web site: www.sandyspringsga.org

Sandy Springs Citizen Response Center: 770.730.5600